

REMARKS

Favorable consideration of this application, as presently amended and in light of the following discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 29-43 and 45-50 are presently pending in this application, Claim 44 having been canceled, Claims 29-33, 36-43 and 45-50 having been amended by the present amendment.

In the outstanding Office Action, the drawings were objected to because of informalities; the specification was objected to for informalities; Claims 29-50 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, for being indefinite; Claims 29-31, 33/29-31, 34/30-31, 35/30-31, 36/29-31, 37/29-31, 38/29-31, 40/29-31, 41/29-31, 42/29-31, 43/29-31, 44/29-31 and 45/29-31 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Bickford (U.S. Patent 4,117,614); and Claims 46-48 and 50/46-48 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Bickford. However, Claims 32, 33-45 depending from Claim 32, Claim 39 depending from Claims 29-31, Claim 49, and Claim 50 depending from Claim 49 were indicated as including allowable subject matter.

First, Applicant acknowledges with appreciation the indication that Claims 32, 33-45 depending from Claim 32, Claim 39 depending from Claims 29-31, Claim 49, and Claim 50 depending from Claim 49 include allowable subject matter. However, since Applicant still believes that Claims 29-31 and 46-48 include allowable subject matter, the claims are maintained accordingly.

With regard to the objection to the drawings, Applicant respectfully directs the Examiner to Figures 3a , 3b, 4a and 4b as the “buffer strip” as recited in Claim 43 is shown as indicated by Reference Numerals 22 and 23. Further, Claim 44 has been canceled herein. Therefore, the outstanding objection on this matter is believed to be overcome.

With regard to the objection to the specification, Applicant respectfully directs the Examiner to page 8, line 1 to page 9, line 23 of the specification. Because this section of the specification describes the “internal relief” and “buffer strips,” the specification is believed to provide sufficient bases for Claims 32, 39, 43 and 49.

With regard to the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, Claims 29-50 have been amended to clarify the subject matter recited therein. Thus, Claims 29-50 are believed to be in compliance with the requirements of the statute. If, however, the Examiner disagrees, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned who will be happy to work in a joint effort to derive mutually satisfactory claim language.

Briefly, Claim 29 of the present invention is directed to a refrigerator shelf including at least one support panel formed of at least one sheet of glass or plastic, the at least one support panel having a plurality of corners, and a plurality of coverpieces comprising a plurality of cornerpieces each positioned to cover one of the plurality of corners of the at least one support panel, wherein the plurality of cornerpieces covers an entire periphery of the at least one support panel when assembled.

The outstanding Office Action asserts that Bickford discloses the subject matter recited in Claim 29. Nevertheless, Bickford does not teach a refrigerator shelf including at least one support panel formed of at least one sheet of glass or plastic, the at least one support panel having a plurality of corners, and a plurality of coverpieces comprising a plurality of cornerpieces each positioned to cover one of the plurality of corners of the at least one support panel, wherein the plurality of cornerpieces covers an entire periphery of the at least one support panel when assembled. On the other hand, Bickford discloses a picture frame which is certainly not adapted to fulfill specific requirements for a refrigerator shelf, e.g., size, resistance, material, and treatment. As such, it is respectfully submitted that a person of

ordinary skill in the art would not look for a solution for the refrigerator shelf in such a distant field dealing with fragile structures for decoration, and that the outstanding Office Action is predicated upon a hindsight guided by Applicant's disclosure. Therefore, Applicant respectfully traverses the outstanding rejections based on Bickford.

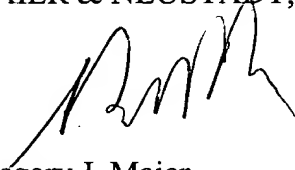
Likewise, independent Claims 30, 31 and 46-48 include subject matter substantially similar to what is recited in Claim 29 to the extent discussed above. Thus, Claims 30, 31 and 46-48 are also distinguishable from Bickford.

For the foregoing reasons, Claims 29-31 and 46-48 are believed to be allowable. Furthermore, substantially the same arguments set forth above also apply to dependent Claims 33-43, 45 and 50 ultimately depending from Claims 29-31 and 46-48. Hence, Claims 33-43, 45 and 50 are believed to be allowable as well.

In light of the prior indication of the allowable subject matters and in view of the amendments and discussions presented above, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is in condition for allowance. Therefore, an early action favorable to that effect is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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IN THE CLAIMS

Please cancel without prejudice Claim 44, and amend Claims 29-33, 36-43 and 45-50 as follows:

--29. (Amended) A refrigerator shelf comprising:

at least one support panel formed of at least one sheet of glass or plastic, the at least one support panel having a plurality of corners; and

a plurality of coverpieces comprising a plurality of cornerpieces each positioned to cover one of the plurality of corners of the at least one support panel, wherein the plurality of cornerpieces covers an entire periphery of the at least one support panel when assembled.

30. (Amended) A refrigerator shelf comprising:

at least one support panel formed of at least one sheet of glass or plastic, the at least one support panel having a plurality of corners; and

a plurality of coverpieces comprising at least one cornerpiece covering one of the plurality of corners of the at least one support panel, wherein at least one of the plurality of coverpieces is adapted to fit together with another one of the plurality of coverpieces.

31. (Amended) A refrigerator shelf comprising:

at least one support panel formed of at least one sheet of glass or plastic, the at least one support panel having a plurality of corners; and

a plurality of coverpieces comprising at least one cornerpiece covering one of the plurality of corners of the at least one support panel, wherein at least one of the plurality of coverpieces is adapted to slip or slide in another one of the plurality of coverpieces so as to form a telescopic set of coverpieces.

32. (Amended) A shelf comprising:

at least one support panel formed of at least one sheet of glass or plastic, the at least one support panel having a plurality of corners; and

a plurality of coverpieces comprising at least one cornerpiece covering one of the plurality of corners of the at least one support panel, wherein at least one of the plurality of coverpieces is attached to the at least one support panel via at least one internal relief provided on the at least one of the plurality of coverpieces, thereby allowing the at least one of the plurality of coverpieces [coverpiece] to be anchored in at least one groove made on the at least one support panel.

33. (Amended) A shelf according to claims 29, 30, 31 or 32, wherein at least one of the plurality of cornerpieces [or coverpieces] comprises plastic.

36. (Amended) A shelf according to claims 29, 30, 31 or 32, wherein the plurality of coverpieces [or cornerpieces] has a length and shape such that the plurality of coverpieces [or cornerpieces] covers the entire periphery of the panel.

37. (Amended) A shelf according to claims 29, 30, 31 or 32, wherein at least one of the plurality of coverpieces [or cornerpieces] is adapted to fit together with another one of the plurality of coverpieces [or cornerpieces].

38. (Amended) A shelf according to claims 29, 30, 31 or 32, wherein at least one of the plurality of coverpieces [or cornerpieces] is adapted to slip or slide in another one of the

plurality of coverpieces [or cornerpieces] so as to form a telescopic set of coverpieces [or cornerpieces].

39. (Amended) A shelf according to claims 29, 30, 31 or 32, wherein at least one of the plurality of coverpieces [or cornerpieces] is attached to the at least one support panel via at least one internal relief provided on the at least one of the plurality of coverpieces, thereby allowing the at least one of the plurality of coverpieces [or cornerpieces] to be anchored in at least one groove made on the at least one support panel.

40. (Amended) A shelf according to claims 29, 30, 31 or 32, wherein at least one of the plurality of coverpieces [or cornerpieces] includes an [at least one] assembling means [mean] for assembling with a chassis of an item of furniture or is configured to receive the [at least one] assembling means [mean].

41. (Amended) A shelf according to claims 29, 30, 31 or 32, wherein at least one of the plurality of coverpieces [or cornerpieces] includes at least one stiffening fin or is configured to receive the at least one stiffening fin.

42. (Amended) A shelf according to claims 29, 30, 31 or 32, wherein at least one of the plurality of coverpieces [or cornerpieces] includes at least one rim configured to prevent liquids from running off or is configured to receive the at least one rim.

43. (Amended) A shelf according to claims 29, 30, 31 or 32, wherein at least one of the plurality of coverpieces [or cornerpieces] includes at least one buffer strip or is configured to receive the at least one buffer strip.

44. (Canceled)

45. (Amended) A shelf according to claims 29, 30, 31 or 32, wherein at least one of the plurality of coverpieces [or cornerpieces] includes an [at least one] attaching means [mean] for attaching an [at least one] additional element or is configured to receive the [at least] one attaching means [mean].

46. (Amended) A method of manufacturing a refrigerator shelf, comprising the steps of:

providing a support panel having a plurality of corners and providing a plurality of cornerpieces each configured to cover one of the plurality of corners of the at least one support panel and an entire periphery of the support panel when assembled; and

assembling the plurality of cornerpieces onto the support panel so that the plurality of cornerpieces covers an entire periphery of the at least one support panel.

47. (Amended) A method of manufacturing a refrigerator shelf, comprising the steps of:

providing a support panel having a plurality of corners and providing a plurality of coverpieces comprising at least one cornerpiece configured to cover one of the plurality of corners of the at least one support panel, at least one of the plurality of coverpieces being adapted to fit together with another one of the plurality of coverpieces; and

assembling the plurality of coverpieces onto the support panel so that the at least one cornerpiece covers one of the plurality of corners of the at least one support panel.

48. (Amended) A method of manufacturing a refrigerator shelf, comprising the steps of:

providing a support panel having a plurality of corners and providing a plurality of coverpieces comprising [comprises] at least one cornerpiece configured to cover one of the plurality of corners of the at least one support panel, at least one of the plurality of coverpieces being adapted to slip or slide in another one of the plurality of coverpieces so as to form a telescopic set of coverpieces; and

assembling the plurality of coverpieces onto the support panel so that the at least one cornerpiece covers one of the plurality of corners of the at least one support panel.

49. (Amended) A method of manufacturing a shelf, comprising the steps of:
providing a support panel having a plurality of corners and providing a plurality of coverpieces comprising at least one cornerpiece configured to cover one of the plurality of corners of the at least one support panel; and

while assembling the plurality of coverpieces onto the support panel, attaching at least one of the plurality of coverpieces to the at least one support panel via at least one internal relief provided on the at least one of the plurality of coverpieces, thereby allowing the at least one of the plurality of coverpieces to be anchored in at least one groove made on the at least one support panel.

50. (Amended) A method according to claims 46, 47, 48 or 49, wherein at least two of the plurality of coverpieces or cornerpieces are fitted one with the other over at least part of their length and heigh.--